

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Prime Minister Golda Meir
Simcha Dinitz, Ambassador to the United States

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff *HR*

DATE AND TIME: Saturday, January 12, 1974
8:15 - 9:00 a.m.

Mrs. Meir's Residence
Jerusalem

Secretary Kissinger: How are you? You don't look as bad as I feared.

Prime Minister Meir: Until yesterday it was very painful condition. I couldn't sit up. I was only comfortable horizontally!

How is Sadat?

Secretary Kissinger: He has also been ill -- with the flu. I have met all of the Arab leaders now. He I think is the best one to deal with.

Prime Minister Meir: Really? We never thought much of him.

Secretary Kissinger: He tells me what he thinks of the Russians. He could be lying, but they cancelled . . .

Ambassador Dinitz: Fahmi's visit.

Secretary Kissinger:

Asad refers to him as "that pimp". They say they know what he wants -- to put the Canal behind him and a demilitarized zone in front of him so he has an excuse to get out of the war.

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I heard Qaddhafi and Bourguiba are planning a union.

I told him -- if you forgive me -- about your domestic situation, and the National Religious Party, and that you couldn't do much on the Palestinian issue. I said, don't agitate them. He said, "That's right." He said he would raise no other issue in 1974. I made it a condition to come out here that he not raise any issue other than disengagement. I told you that.

Ambassador Dinitz: Yes.

Prime Minister Meir: Heykal says they could never have had this without the war.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. He raised this.

Prime Minister Meir: Heykal came out against the whole thing. He said it's the same as the interim settlement.

Secretary Kissinger: He is in a fragile position. I think from the Arab position he is making a mistake.

Prime Minister Meir: Until recently Egypt didn't think of itself as Arab. Antony Eden practically forced them into the Arab League.

Secretary Kissinger: I have talked with Asad. After all I am not that easy to fool. But Sadat talks ten minutes on Palestine so he can say he raised it. He doesn't have the fire the others have.

Nasser I guess was different.

Prime Minister Meir: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: Today he asked for U.S. support for building a new canal east of the present Canal for supertankers, in the disengagement zone.

Ambassador Dinitz: We had heard of an idea of building one to the west of the Canal.

Secretary Kissinger: The present one will be enlarged, but it is only for one-way. The new one will be two-way.

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I told him, "Get it from the other Arabs, who have the money." He said, "I want a relationship with the West, as a balance." He wants to finance it with one-half Saudi and one-half U. S. money.

My estimate is to give him as much support as he wants.

I haven't studied it. With the Canal behind him, reopened, and a demilitarized zone, it will be harder for him to restart the war.

Prime Minister Meir: Dulles made a big mistake with the Aswan Dam.

What did he say about the disengagement plan?

Secretary Kissinger: I didn't raise it. I spent the time producing anxiety. I told them your political situation was disorganized.

Ambassador Dinitz: That is right!

Secretary Kissinger: I said I thought your strategy was to delay. He got anxious after this philosophical discussion. He said he had either to go on the sharp attack or go to disengagement. He said he would have to go to the UN for the October 22 lines.

He wants it fast. He wants it done while I am here. I told him if he wants it fast, he can't get all that he wants.

I said it makes no difference if the line is five kilometers this way or that.

So I prepared him philosophically.

He can't take an obligation towards Israel on what troops he can have on Egyptian territory. He is willing to put in writing to us, as a letter to the President, what limits he is willing to accept. The difficulty from your point of view is you have no publicity.

Ambassador Dinitz: It means we won't be able to say on what terms we accept it.

Secretary Kissinger: The last time he said two divisions with their tanks. I told him it would take much less. He has agreed to write into the

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agreement free passage through the Straits of Tiran and Bab al-Mandeb. And I told him we would give you a letter and we would stand behind it.

Ambassador Dinitz: In the Straits of Tiran we don't want free passage from him.

Prime Minister Meir: Because we won't leave Sharm el-Shaikh.

Secretary Kissinger: You tell me what you want. He won't urge it.

If I may say, your generals haven't helped it and Dayan's son-in-law too [Dov Sion]. Sadat said Dayan's son-in-law already said you would settle for cargoes only.

I spoke ill of your political leaders, because all of them were making their own proposals and then withdrawing them. But it is all water over the dam.

So there are three major problems. One is where the line is. They'll want it in the Mitla Pass. Second is the number of forces on the East Bank. Third is the location of SAMs on the West Bank.

Those are the big issues that I can foresee.

I am not judging his position.

Prime Minister Meir: I understand.

Secretary Kissinger: I made such a big case to him that he would be a great statesman and achieve a great victory by getting you off the West Bank so he shouldn't be worried by five kilometers. I think he will do it. But he won't agree to two battalions; that I tell you.

But you were right last time.

Prime Minister Meir: Not too often!

But after all what you said is valid for him. We are on the West Bank; we will move off. The Third Army is trapped. It really doesn't matter how many troops he has on the East Bank.

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Secretary Kissinger: Yes, but our intelligence shows he is in trouble from the radicals and other Arabs. So I don't think he will accept two battalions. The limit on SAMs I don't think they'll accept.

Where are they now in the areas they hold?

Ambassador Dinitz: Dayan will be able to tell you.

Prime Minister Meir: They just shot down -- what do you call them? -- a pilotless plane.

Secretary Kissinger: Drones. But I think it will be easier to ask him not to move SAMs into the areas you vacate than to withdraw them in areas he holds. He has a problem.

Prime Minister Meir: He has ways of getting rid of people who disagree with him.

Secretary Kissinger: But my impression is it is real. Boumedienne told me his heart is in Syria but his head is in Egypt.

Prime Minister Meir: Asad will remain.

Secretary Kissinger: Up to now you have been saved because the talks are going on, and secondly because everyone thinks the embargo will be lifted as a result of this -- which is almost certainly true -- and third, the Europeans and Japanese don't know how to get into the game, which is partly a result of this.

I think if you can get the lists and get talks with the Syrians going, you will be able to get another two-five months.

Prime Minister Meir: They are terrible.

Secretary Kissinger: Someone suggested that I see the families.

Ambassador Dinitz: We came up with a compromise.

Prime Minister Meir: The Syrian organization is very responsible.

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Secretary Kissinger: As long as I am not accused of betraying them.

Prime Minister Meir: No, no.

Secretary Kissinger: All right, Peter, set that up. [The meeting was held on Sunday.]

Ambassador Dinitz: The Israeli press is not accusing the United States of doing this.

Prime Minister Meir: Before you left Washington, you said something.

Ambassador Dinitz: In your press conference.

Prime Minister Meir: You made a statement which was very well received.

Ambassador Dinitz: If you can say this, it will certainly be well received.

Prime Minister Meir: I have told them what the President is doing with the Russians.

Secretary Kissinger: I will do it, or Sisco. And Sadat agrees with me that they must give the lists and Red Cross visits. He swears he wrote a letter to Asad.

Prime Minister Meir: Asad is terrible.

Secretary Kissinger: Asad is not so bad -- he is far worse than Sadat -- but Sadat says Khaddam, the Foreign Minister, is vicious, and a Soviet agent. He [Asad] can't make decisions on his own but has to consult the Baath party. Sadat says the party has Soviet agents and Iraqi agents.

Ambassador Dinitz: It is infiltrated.

Prime Minister Meir: The Red Cross says they are anxious for getting the sick and wounded out of Suez City. We said fine, but let us get the dead out.

I don't know why they keep on shooting. It can't be just something local.

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Secretary Kissinger: No, they want to keep you mobilized.

Prime Minister Meir: Today two were killed.

Secretary Kissinger: Near Suez City?

Prime Minister Meir: No, Ismailia. Trucks were hit near Kilometer 101.

Ambassador Dinitz: And in the City.

Secretary Kissinger: Incidentally, Sadat would like to sign the basic agreement while I am in the Middle East -- at Kilometer 101 -- and then send it to Geneva. This is an asset that can be used if he wants to do it fast. Then send it to Geneva for final details.

Prime Minister Meir: There are some things I just can't do. He has a big force on the East Bank, and SAMs.

Our military people will tell you tomorrow.

Secretary Kissinger: We'll tell everyone it is a disengagement discussion, not a military briefing.

Ambassador Dinitz: I want to tell the Prime Minister that our meeting at the Pentagon yesterday was a lot better than the previous one. Schlesinger said he would review everything with a positive attitude. His people said, "Don't sic Kissinger on us yet. Give us a few days to produce." [Laughter] That is what they said. They said they needed two to three days to review.

Prime Minister Meir: They wouldn't let us have rifles.

Ambassador Dinitz: We finally got it out with our own planes.

Secretary Kissinger: It is stupid because even if they are pro-Arab, it is better to give it now while you are negotiating than later.

Ambassador Dinitz: Schlesinger isn't the problem; it is his deputy.

Ambassador Kissinger: Yes.

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Ambassador Dinitz: You know Schlesinger is Jewish.

Secretary Kissinger: Really?

Ambassador Dinitz: He converted when he married a non-Jewish girl.

Secretary Kissinger: Schlesinger is Jewish? That is dangerous.

[From 8:50 to about 9:00 the Prime Minister and the Secretary conferred alone.]